1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
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a fearful pride, but soon lose their fear, and try to crowd into the seats; their women, however, are as reluctant to risk entering a car as any old village woman in Cornwall thirty-five years ago. It was a pleasure later in the day to see the bold adventurers of the morning who watched the white man's toilet operations conducting parties of sight-seers into the tent and pantomiming the use of brush, razor and everything there. The Bison-horn Maria is more sophisticated, and will not intrude without being asked, nor is he so curious about small things; but a motor-car is as great a draw to him as to the hill men. Both are very interested in seeing a carburettor stripped and assembled or a tyre changed, or any mechanical repairs; they show quick intelligence, and could soon be taught. In the spate of bridge building on the State roads in recent years they have been quick to grasp methods of sinking piles or getting great beams into position, and have not been slow to offer suggestions that have sometimes been practicable. The newly built road bridge over the Indrawati at Jagdalpur is really built according to the same method as the bridges which even Hill Marias construct across their rivers, with modern and stronger materials and other improvements.

My inquisitiveness about their houses, habits, possessions, agriculture and customs in their eyes must seem much like their curiosity about my ways. Actually their mental processes are not unlike ours, when allowance is made for their centuries of isolation; they are certainly more receptive than the ordinary villager of British India, whose thought has for generations been stunted by the cumbrous wrappings of caste and debased Hinduism. A striking instance of this is the comparative ease with which vaccination was made compulsory years ago throughout the State and is welcomed by the Marias, in strong contrast to the keen opposition to it even in the cities of British India and to the caution venturing on timidity with which provincial Governments make tentative advances in the direction of universal compulsion. Not only is vaccination really universal even in the hill villages, but the Marias are keenly alive to the advantages of inoculation for cholera and yaws, and, in fact, are inclined to demand '*tika*' or inoculation for every ailment, those of them, that is, who have seen for themselves cholera checked or yaws cured by injections; for till recently no medical relief other than vaccination had reached the hills.

In natural cheerfulness few races can surpass the Hill Marias, who, like all Gonds, are quick to see the fun of things, whether it be something that spontaneously appeals to their sense of humour, or a joke put to them by some outsider. Their humour is apt to be broad. Very few serious disputes arise in Abujhmar, where a

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There was a disputed boundary between the village of Kurmer in the Chhota Dongar Mar *pargana* and the adjacent Kutru Mar village of Jatalur; the Jata clan asserted possession over a strip of land belonging to the Parllo clan of Kurmer. I suggested, on the strength of a tale I had heard of former Chiefs' methods of justice, that the head of each village should come with a cock to the land, and that the land should go to the clan whose cock crowed first. This was hailed by both sides as a sound solution, and off we went to the land; but just before we reached it the Jata headman began to hang back, and finally backed out of the test; I awarded the land to the Parllo clan to the approval of men present from other clans, and on going over the land found that it contained a *pagh'ai* or alternative village site of the Parllo clan besides the cromlech left to mark the site of the Village Mother's 'temple', the *hasyaq-gaita's udam-garia* or seat of honour, and the *kotokal* or line of menhirs erected in the name of the Parllo dead. Here the Jata clan finally abandoned their claim when challenged by the Parllo *hasyaq-gaita* to eat earth from under the Village Mother's cromlech.

To be left to live the free life of the hills, untrammelled by restrictions on his user of forest, earth and water or his right to shift his village and his *penda* cultivation, is the unconscious ideal of the Hill Maria. If he is sentenced to a long term of imprisonment, he will beg to be hanged rather than be confined within walls; and few of them or of the wilder Bison-horn Marias survive long imprisonment.

The Hill Maria shows great artistry in his bead-work, and is never at fault in his discrimination between colours and shades, though he uses for all shades of green and blue the one word *kaqarondla*. He has general terms also for red, white, black and yellow, but none for intermediate shades. In his houses he draws rude cup-marking patterns, *swastikas* and strange creatures in white earth on his mud plaster, or makes rough clay representations of women's breasts. His songs are low and rather melancholic in sound, the youths' voices verging on contralto; but they are far easier for an English ear to understand than Hindu music, and have often a haunting refrain. Both he and the Bison-horn Maria love to hear European records on a gramophone, especially a good soprano or contralto, sea shanties, and violins or trios and quartets playing light chamber music; but operatic fireworks merely provoke laughter, Chaliapin singing the 'Song of Prince Igor' making them ache with laughter, but being often encored. The Marias as a whole have no musical instruments except drums. Though the Bison-horn Maria does not show the Hill Maria's artistry and

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colour sense in bead-work, it is noticeable that the best carpet weavers in Jagdalpur Jail are almost invariably Bison-horn Marias. They are quick to grasp intricacies of pattern, and there is hardly any pattern that they cannot copy. For years the chief instructor in the jail was the double murderer from Palnar already mentioned in this chapter.

The Marias of both kinds are very hospitable. On entering a Hill Maria village you are met by the elders and offered little gifts, an uncouth yam, or dried tobacco leaves and forest fruits. The whole village co-operates to get your camp ready, and to entertain you at night with song and dance. The occasional stranger from other Koitor villages or minor State official is housed and fed, provided he does not outstay his welcome or attempt to be exacting in his demands. Co-operation, in service to the State, in village festivals, in felling of forest for *penda* cultivation, in allotment of *penda* areas, in sowing, reaping, winnowing and storing of grain, in fishing and hunting, is the key to the social life of the Hill Maria, who is a natural communist; his hospitality is perhaps mainly an expression of his ingrained co-operation, though he is genuinely glad to see you after a long absence, and will greet you with tears of joy. The Bison-horn Maria is more of an individualist, or, rather, less of a communist, than the hill man, but he likes to entertain for a wedding or to celebrate the completion of a new *munda* (small rice irrigation tank) and similar occasions on a lavish scale, keeping open house. All Marias are extremely grateful for any benefit received and for sympathy and interest.

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pargana not only acquired a yet younger brother of Pat Raja, Verma Mo'itto Pen, as their clan-god, but also a family of Pat Raja's clan, the Jaterom,[1] as hereditary clan-priests because, the Jaterom being *akomama*[2] (wife-clan) to the Gumelor, the new god was related to them as *mama* or maternal uncle and had to have a priest or *waddai* of his own clan or one *dadabhai*[2] (brother-clan) to it. They say in fact that all clan-gods are mutually related, if they are sometimes very hazy as to the actual relationship; and they add that the gods, being Koitor, must have a full set of brother-clans and wife-clans like any other Koitor. Memories are, however, so poor that it is often difficult to ascertain the name of a man's dead father and quite impossible to ascertain the name of his grandfather and the clan and village of his grandmother, if, indeed, even of his mother; and it would be altogether out of the question to disentangle the descents and relationships of the clans by deduction from the traditional kinship of the clan-gods to Pat Raja and each other.

That old clans split up into new clans is clear, especially among the Hill Marias, from the fact that several of the larger clans have attached to them smaller clans which have no separate clan-god of their own, but attend the celebrations of the god of the large and presumably parent clan; certain other clans, though they have new clan-gods of their own, acknowledge their origin from another clan by taking the permission of the god of that clan before holding their own clan festivals. The way in which these clans split up is a matter belonging rather to the chapter in Part V, where the clan and phratry organization is dealt with as a matter of social organization, than to this chapter on religion. Here the point is that new clans are breaking off, and that their separation from the parent clan is signalized by the birth of a son or daughter (a son in the cases that I have seen) to the god of the parent clan. Thus Tumirgunda, in the plains between Handawada, still a true Hill Maria village, and the river Indrawati, near Barsur, belongs to the Tamo clan, and is the seat of their god Hurra Gunda Mo'itto[3] Pen. The *modul-waddai* of this clan-god was in 1930 still the *modul-waddai* of neighbouring villages of the Atami clan; and of the Tamo and Atami villages in his 'see' some were, like Tumirgunda itself, still mainly Hill Maria in culture, dancing in Hill Maria style, and some had changed to Bison-horn culture and dancing, and were recognized as Bison-horn

[1] Jāterom is the plural of Jāte; the clan is distinct from the Jātā, plural Jātālēr, and the Jāti clan of Jātwara *pargana*.

[2] Clans are *akomama* to clans with which they may intermarry, but *dadabhai* to all others.

[3] '*Mo'itto*' ('old man') or '*mutta'i*' ('old woman') is always added to the clan-god's name.

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CHAPTER XIII

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION; THE PHRATRIES AND CLANS

114 THE investigations that have resulted in the materials for this book have had perforce to be made piecemeal in the intervals of a busy administrative task. Here the professional ethnologist who is able to make a prolonged stay among the subjects of his studies has a profound advantage over the administrator; and in no direction is this advantage more pronounced than in tracing the ramifications of a system of social organization. Even where the genealogical method of enquiry can be profitably employed it is useless for this wide purpose, unless the collection of pedigrees and of information on laws and customs based upon them can be spread over as wide a field as possible. Apart from the lack of leisure from which an official administering a State so large and with such a tradition of personal rule as Bastar must suffer, there is a further difficulty [153] about genealogical enquiries, namely the poor memories of the Marias as to their ancestors, sometimes even as to their own parents and uncles. It is very seldom that anyone can remember the names of ancestors earlier than his grandparents; many cannot even remember their grandmother's name, much less her clan, unless the family has regularly followed the tradition of cross-cousin marriage. When, as among the Hill Marias, there is so little individual property to pass by inheritance, land being the property of the clan, cattle being scarce, and the contents of the houses being either food or not made of durable materials, some of which have to be buried with their owner or destroyed at his death, the genealogical method may not lead the enquirer very far. Very old men and women are, moreover, not common. The only pedigree covering more than three generations that I was able to collect is printed in Appendix II after the lists of clans. Two circumstances favoured it. There were two very old but intelligent men, Usendi Baiyya and Usendi Dangi, living when the pedigree was first taken in 1930; their nephew Usendi Moda, a man of unusual intelligence, was then about fifty, and all three had a good memory of the clans and villages with which the family had intermarried for three generations; even then Baiyya and Dangi could not remember their paternal grandmother's name or the clan and village from which